

## ESSEX - MIDDLE RIVER COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN

population. This concept was seen in Baltimore County with the bookmobiles. One non-profit service provider commented that his organization suffered from an "edifice complex," too rooted to bricks and mortar housing and not effectively delivering service to the needy. Government also thinks in terms of bricks and mortar, and a service caravan that travels through communities on a regular basis, maybe, using elementary schools as a site could deliver social service and housing information and applications, license and permit renewals, social service recertification, health services and immunizations, etc.

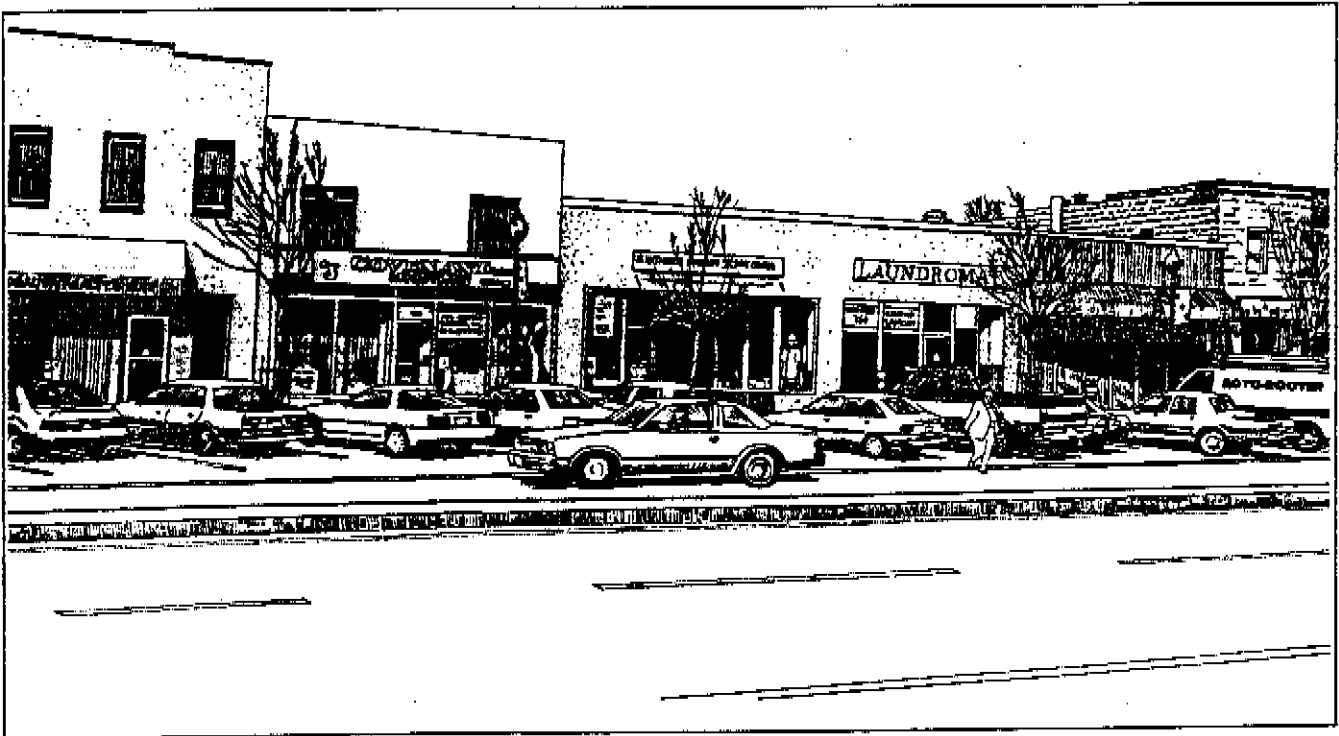
### **46. A SUBSTANCE ABUSE TASK FORCE SHOULD EVALUATE THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAMS IN THE COMMUNITY.**

The issue of substance abuse touches the lives of many families in the study area and the availability of substance abuse programs is crucial to the wellness of the community. A task force should be established to evaluate the need for additional services and the effectiveness of current services.

## **E**CONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Economic development is the engine that drives the growth and stability of the community. People come to a community because of its proximity to work. People leave a community when there is no work to be found. It has been noted that the deterioration of a community begins when the jobs leave.

The fortunes of Essex - Middle River have swung like a pendulum on the fortunes of Bethlehem Steel and the Martin Company (now Lockheed - Martin). At their peak the companies employed over 80,000 people. Almost every family has had someone employed by those companies. With the switch to technology and the decline of "smokestack" industry in eastern Baltimore County, the jobs left, and today, the two companies combined employ less than 10,000. Housing, however, was built in the late 1950's and in the 1960's and 1970's in accordance with the Baltimore County Master Plan of the time to



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accommodate additional industrial development planned for the Back River Peninsula. That industrial base never materialized, and with the advent of wetlands regulation and the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area law, it became clear that the true value of the peninsula lay in conserving its environmental attributes.

Without the jobs to generate income many of the working residents have left. Commercial enterprises have lessened in number as their patrons have left and as competition from regional malls located along the Baltimore beltway have increased.

At the same time as the need for industry and job creation has grown the resentment and concern about the negative impacts of business has grown in

the residential areas. Although the Martin State Airport is one of the major economic development resources of the area, the attendant noise is greatly resented by the residential communities of Wilson Point and Bowleys Quarters. Similarly, the residential communities have a heightened awareness of the costs of environmental pollution. They are confronted daily by water pollution from failing private septic systems and see the impact on the health of the Bay from wetland deterioration. The communities wish to preserve the remaining open areas that are left in order that they not intrude on more sensitive wetlands. Court challenges not infrequently confront new or expanding businesses due to environmental impacts.

Finally, as a recent study sponsored by the Eastern Baltimore Area Chamber of Commerce indicates, business and industry have to have a reason to select one area over another. It may be low cost land or a skilled and efficient labor force; it may be proximity to markets; it may be a high quality of amenities. This community is in competition for new jobs with every other community in the metropolitan area, and it must be able to address the questions of why stay here and why move here.

In the face of these issues it must be recognized that most jobs come from businesses already located within a community. Expansion of existing business accounts for well over the majority of new jobs. Consequently, existing business should be given the

opportunity and incentive to expand and thrive in the Essex - Middle River community.

### **PROMOTION AND MARKETING OF COMMUNITY**

#### **47. A MARKETING PACKET SHOULD BE PRODUCED TO BE PRESENTED TO POTENTIAL HOME BUYERS.**

Too often realtors, particularly those outside the area, do not have an appreciation of the services or of the available housing or of the proximity to major highways. The community has several assets: houses at lower cost than comparable housing elsewhere in the metropolitan area, waterfront proximity, and proximity to interstate highways that make job markets in Anne Arundel and Harford County readily accessible as well as those in western Baltimore County and Baltimore City. These assets along with regional assets could be used to market the community to others.

#### **48. COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD ORGANIZE PUBLICITY PARTNERSHIPS WITH EMPLOYERS, LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS, LENDERS, REALTORS AND TITLE COMPANIES TO ADVERTISE EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY SUCH AS ESSEX DAY, RIVERFEST, THE AIR SHOW, AND COASTWEEKS.**

There are numerous community events promoting various aspects of the area, which should be better marketed in area-wide publications. Attractions such as Coastweeks, Ballestone, and the Airshow deserve regional support.

#### **49. AT LOCAL EVENTS A BOOTH SHOULD BE DEDICATED TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF LITERATURE ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AND OTHER EVENTS.**

Home ownership plans and programs could also be distributed and advertised at events outside the region to promote Essex - Middle River as an attractive place to live.

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### **50. INFORMATION SHOULD BE DISTRIBUTED THROUGH THE LOCAL SCHOOLS AND LIBRARY ABOUT PUBLIC SAFETY AND EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENTS.**

Public safety and education are topics of great interest to most people. Too often only the negative news gets published in the media, and the good that is occurring including citizen involvement needs to be brought home to the community. Oddly, there may be more recognition of certain teachers and individuals for their achievements outside the community than within it.

### **51. A COMMUNITY PRIDE COMMITTEE SHOULD BE ORGANIZED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.**

This committee would be the primary agent for the dissemination of information about housing and business opportunity in the area. Volunteers for the committee could be drawn from outside the chamber to man booths and make presentations. With the support of the real estate community this committee could work to promote and market the community as described above.

### **52. A COMMITTEE SHOULD BE FORMED TO EVALUATE THE POSSIBILITY OF DESIGNATING MIDDLE RIVER AS A HISTORIC DISTRICT.**

Given the rich history centering around the many cultures that converged on the area as a result of World War II the area may find it beneficial to have historic district designation.

### **53. THE RESOURCES OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS SHOULD BE MARKETED AS AN ATTRACTION TO NEW BUSINESS.**

Essex Community College and Eastern Technical School have tremendous resources that might be utilized by small business. The college has job training programs, and the technical school has student projects on a highly sophisticated technical level that could be used as an aid to small business. These resources should be better marketed and publicized.

## **EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS**

### **54. THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES SHOULD HAVE A DEFINED ROLE IN THE PRIVATIZATION EFFORTS OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OF BALTIMORE COUNTY.**

Education and job training could be an important resource in the marketing of the county as a whole. The efforts to privatize economic development and to involve the private sector should not overlook the resources of the county's educational institutions.

### **55. A ONE STOP SHOP SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE AT THE JOB TRAINING CENTER FOR THOSE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT.**

A place should be established where those seeking employment can look at available positions. The center would work as a placement office not just for those seeking training or retraining but for the employment community as a whole. Businesses should be encouraged to advertise generally and use the center as a resource.

## **SMALL BUSINESS EXPANSION**

### **56. SBA LOANS ARE FREQUENTLY VERY EXPENSIVE AND ARE NOT COST EFFICIENT FOR SMALL COMPANIES.**

The County should consider such a program in conjunction with local bank programs for reinvestment in communities.

### **57. THE COUNTY SHOULD CONSIDER WAIVING OR DROPPING DEVELOPMENT COSTS FOR THE EXPANSION OF EXISTING SMALL BUSINESS IN COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREAS.**

The county now charges significant review fees for even minor development. Storm water management plans may cost thousands in review fees. These fees operate as a disincentive for small business to expand. The county seems willing to aid large employers to locate in the county by expediting the development and zoning processes, but it has done little to aid the small business. Small businesses are still required to hire experts to prepare costly plans for a costly review fee. Too often the costs of plan preparation and review exceed the actual cost of the

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improvement. This adds significantly to Baltimore County's poor development reputation.

### **58. THE COUNTY SHOULD CONSIDER A PROGRAM WHEREBY THEY PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE PREPARATION OF DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN EXCHANGE FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN LANDSCAPING AND AESTHETICS IN COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREAS.**

The county had a program under the critical area growth allocation process whereby applicants with small acreage had the assistance of the county in the preparation of their application and plans. The county should consider a similar program, particularly in the nature of site plans, which can cost thousands to prepare. When plans serve little purpose the money spent on the plans could instead be paid into a fund to improve the community's appearance or to improve the aesthetics of the proposed improvement.

### **59. BUSINESS INCUBATORS SHOULD AGAIN BE CONSIDERED FOR THE ESSEX- MIDDLE RIVER COMMUNITY.**

Several years ago the county considered locating a small business incubator project modeled on a project in York, Pennsylvania in the older retail area of Essex. Martin State Airport also was considered for a small manufacturing incubator. These concepts were good ones and should be reexamined. There are many small businesses, some part-time, in the community that could use the incubator facility to expand.

### **60. THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION SHOULD ESTABLISH A CLEARINGHOUSE OF PROGRAMS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN A LOCAL OFFICE THAT WOULD AID SMALL BUSINESSES WITH EXPANSION, REDEVELOPMENT, AND RELOCATION.**

To a small business person time is very precious because time away from the business may mean that it is closed, yet going through the process in Towson is very time consuming. The county is well aware of the numerous pitfalls that await the new proposal, and

all of them are time consuming. The Essex multi-government center should be expanded to include a clearinghouse of accurate information to aid the small business and prevent lost time. It would be a great help if much of the process itself could be handled within the community rather than in the centralized maze of the Towson complex.

### **61. A STATE OF THE ART CONFERENCE CENTER IS NEEDED IN THE COMMUNITY FOR CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS.**

Eastern Technical High School is a logical site for a modern conference center. Their communications and audio-visual equipment is extensive, and their facility demonstrative of what a successful education program can be. The county should support funding for such a center.

### **62. ROUTE 43 (WHITE MARSH BOULEVARD) SHOULD BE EXTENDED FROM ITS CURRENT TERMINUS AT ROUTE 40 (PULASKI HIGHWAY) TO ROUTE 150 (EASTERN BOULEVARD).**

The A.V. Williams tract presents a unique economic development opportunity to the area. The tract comprises nearly 1100 acres of industrially zoned land, however, the current road network does not allow for easy access to the site making industrial development impossible. The development of this road could foster major economic growth similar to the development of other areas along the I95 corridor.

### **63. THE COUNTY NEEDS TO ADOPT A SIGNAGE PACKAGE FOR THE COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREAS.**

One cannot objectively drive down Eastern Boulevard and not notice the proliferation of signs. Signs beget more and bigger signs. Signage regulations calling for replacement of existing signs and new standards should be adopted. A local committee should be formed consisting of business and community representatives to adopt signage regulations for Essex-Middle River. The county and state also have to objectively look at the quantity of their signage with a view to limiting the number of directional signs they have posted as most of the signs in the community are public signs.

**64. THE COUNTY SHOULD ADOPT THE PROPOSAL FOR WATERFRONT DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE TO REPLACE EXISTING MARINA AND RESTAURANT SIGNS AND TO DIRECT PEOPLE TO THE WATERFRONT AMENITIES.**

A proposal now being circulated in the County would adopt directional signs and boards listing marinas and restaurants available in the various peninsulas in the community. Because many of the facilities are difficult to find by those not familiar with the community, these signs would be a real benefit, and ultimately would serve the business community. The residential community would also be served because the number of business signs on residential properties would be reduced.